



Montgomery County Council

For Immediate Release

July 16, 2012

CONTACT: Sonya Healy 240-777-7970 / Neil H. Greenberger 240-777-7939

N
E
W
S

R
E
L
E
A
S
E

Councilmembers Valerie Ervin, Nancy Navarro, Nancy Floreen to Celebrate Activation of New Wheaton Traffic Signal

*On Friday, July 20, Councilmembers Will Join Community
Members Who Advocated for Years to Get New Signal to
Protect Pedestrians Crossing at Claridge and Veirs Mill Road*

ROCKVILLE, Md., July 16, 2012—Montgomery County Councilmembers Valerie Ervin, Nancy Navarro and Nancy Floreen will join members of the County's delegation to the Maryland General Assembly and residents at 3:30 p.m. on Friday, July 20, to celebrate the activation of a new traffic signal at the intersection of Claridge Road and Veirs Mill Road (Maryland Route 586) in Wheaton. The new traffic signal, which was installed after years of advocacy efforts led by area civic associations, will help protect pedestrians crossing multiple lanes of traffic.

The intersection, which is bordered by St. Catherine Laboure Parish and a highly utilized bus stop, was the site of 70 accidents between 2003 and 2008, including three that resulted in fatalities.

The installation of the traffic signal is the culmination of a multi-year effort by residents, members of the County delegation to the Maryland General Assembly and Councilmember Ervin. It was Councilmember Ervin who brought the need to improve safety at the intersection to the attention of the State Highway Administration in 2008 after walking the neighborhood with residents.

"The installation of this new traffic signal is a prime example of how policy makers work with residents to improve our quality of life," said Councilmember Ervin. "I have seen first hand how dangerous crossing at this intersection can be and have talked with neighbors about the numerous close calls that have occurred at this location."

Council Vice President Navarro said: “This is a great example of community members working with their elected officials to get something accomplished. The installation of this new traffic light will significantly increase pedestrian safety at this busy and dangerous intersection. Councilmember Ervin has been a tireless advocate for Wheaton and I look forward to continuing to build on her accomplishments for this community.”

Councilmember Floreen said: “This traffic signal is a great example of how a dedicated group of people can make a huge impact in their community. Pedestrian safety is one of the highest priorities in any neighborhood, and I’m glad to see this terrific improvement.”

Residents of the area spent more than two decades advocating for the signal’s installation before finally seeing their efforts come to fruition.

Instead of a traffic signal, the State Highway Administration (SHA) originally proposed installing a hazard identification beacon, which is a warning sign with flashing yellow lights that is activated when a pedestrian pushes a button at a crosswalk, alerting drivers to the presence of pedestrians. However, residents conducted their own research that ultimately helped convince SHA to install the traffic signal.

In the period that SHA declined to install a traffic light, Carolyn Gupta of the Connecticut Avenue Estates Civic Association, Patricia Price of the Rock Creek Palisades Citizens Association and Joyce Thomas of the Montclair Manor Homeowners Association refused to give up on their pursuit of getting a light installed. Their research led to the finding that 100 percent of vehicles stopped at the crosswalk when approaching a red traffic signal, but only about 10 percent of motorists stopped at the crosswalk after seeing a flashing hazard identification beacon.

Using this information, residents, students, Councilmember Ervin and other government representatives worked together to convince the State Highway Administration that a traffic signal would be the best option for this location.

James Ryan of Wheaton also was instrumental in the effort, gathering 800 signatures advocating for the installation of the traffic signal. Students from John F. Kennedy High School also joined the efforts.

“As the Council’s representative on the Pedestrian, Bicycle and Traffic Safety Advisory Committee, I am committed to making our streets safe for our residents who use alternative modes of transportation,” said Councilmember Ervin. “This intersection is an extreme challenge, especially for our residents who are forced to cross the street to reach the bus stop and those who are walking to church services. This traffic signal is long over due, and I am delighted that the State Highway Administration did the right thing.”

#####